

southern border crisis. Last fiscal year, Customs and Border Protection apprehended 14,700 pounds of fentanyl, and just a third of the way through the current fiscal year, they have already seized another 12,500 pounds.

But the growing death toll from fentanyl-related overdose tells us that more than enough of this lethal drug is still flowing unchecked. Kentucky isn't the only State losing thousands of its people to lethal drugs produced by China and shipped in by Mexican cartels. Since the Biden administration has ignored a functionally open southern border, every State in America has faced border-State problems.

Last fiscal year, Customs and Border Protection apprehended more than 2.7 million illegal immigrants. That was far and away the highest annual count they had ever seen. Without a coherent, coordinated response from the Biden administration, frontline States from Florida to Texas to Arizona have had to take the response to catch-and-release into their own hands.

These States have dealt with soaring arrivals by busing illegal immigrants to so-called sanctuary jurisdictions in the interior. Colorado's Democratic Governor followed suit.

But setting aside the record-shattering numbers of illegal immigrants who are met and processed at the border, CBP estimates that 1.2 million more people crossed the border and got away since President Biden took office—1.2 million “got-aways.” That is two times the population of my hometown of Louisville, just disappearing into our country.

Ninety-eight of the illegal immigrants CBP apprehended last fiscal year were watch-listed terrorists. Ninety-eight of them were watch-listed terrorists. Thousands were convicted criminals. Along with them, as Kentucky's narcotics officers understand all too well, came millions upon millions of lethal doses of fentanyl. I am proud of the Commonwealth's first responders who are fighting back against this truly devastating killer. But until the Biden administration decides to address the border crisis unfolding on its watch, my fellow Kentuckians will continue to fight a steep uphill battle.

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

Madam President, on an entirely different matter, there is something unusual going on in our Nation's skies, and President Biden needs to communicate and level with the American people.

About 2 weeks ago, the American people learned that a Chinese spy balloon had crossed into our airspace and was taking its time surveilling our homeland. We watched it tour a big chunk of the country before the administration finally, belatedly took it down.

Since then, the public has seemingly heard about another new unidentified flying object seemingly on a daily basis. Yesterday one of our F-16s shot down something they still have not

identified near Lake Huron. The day before that, in consultation with Canada, an American F-22 shot down something else over the Yukon. The day before that, we took out something else over Alaska. The administration has still not been able to divulge any meaningful information about what was shot down.

What in the world is going on? Has the Biden administration just dialed the sensitivity of our radars all the way up? If so, what are these objects that we are just now noticing for the very first time? Are they benign science projects and wayward weather balloons or something more nefarious that we have somehow been missing all this time?

President Biden owes the American people some answers.

What are we shooting down? Where did they come from? Whether they are hostile or not, is there coherent guidance about when to shoot them down? If the administration knew all along about China's surveillance efforts, why did it not have options to shoot that balloon down before it maneuvered itself all across the country? Did the right people in the government know about this surveillance threat? Did ODNI and DOD not adequately share intelligence about the growing threat?

How did we get into a position where the greatest Nation in the world doesn't know what it is traversing our own airspace? How long has the domain awareness gap that NORTHCOM Commander General VanHerck has identified existed, and what has the Department done about it?

The Commander in Chief owes the country some answers.

REMEMBERING TED LERNER

Madam President, now on one final matter, this morning, I was saddened to learn of the passing of my good friend Ted Lerner—the only person I will recognize as an even bigger fan of the Washington Nationals.

When Ted bought the Nationals franchise in 2006, he helped a hometown team plant deep roots in our Nation's Capital for the first time in 33 years. Season by season, his leadership built a team that would bring home Washington's first World Series title in nearly a century.

True Nats fans consider ourselves lucky to have been here for the historic run that Ted orchestrated. But even in as transient a place like Washington, the whole city has been fortunate to be touched by the Lerner family story.

Ted, of course, was a Washingtonian from the beginning, kindergarten through law school. After serving in the Army during the Second World War, he met his wife Annette here.

At every step of the way, Ted's success was a family affair. He got a front-row seat to the hard-working, enterprising spirit of his immigrant parents. He got his start in real estate with a loan from none other than Annette, who at the time had the only paying job between them. The family Ted and

Annette built together has been involved in every facet of the venture that transformed the DC skyline and put the Capitol dome squarely over left center field.

So today, my prayers are with the Lerner family as they mourn a truly distinguished life.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The senior Senator from Illinois.

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I don't know what is up in the skies, what is going around, flying around, being spotted, and I think there are a lot of questions that need to be answered. If it is a threat to the United States in any way, shape, or form, it is absolutely unacceptable, and I think we all agree—both political parties. But when we start giving advice to this President and the Department of Defense in these matters, we have to stop and reflect on the manager of my local car wash in Springfield, IL.

I went there about a week ago when the first balloon was spotted.

He said: Senator, what is going on up there?

I said: I don't know. I think China is responsible for it.

He said: What are they trying to tell us?

I said: Whatever it is, we better answer them and answer them decisively. We don't need anybody from China or any other country flying in our airspace and endangering Americans in the process.

Then he said to me: But what about those cowboys in Congress who want to shoot it down wherever it is? Are they thinking about what is going to happen if the debris from that—whatever it is—falls on a city, hospital, school playground? They don't want to do that, do they, Senator?

Well, I hope they don't. But I wonder, when I listen to the comments of some people here who argue that we should have shot down that balloon when it was going across the United States, if they reflect on what might have been the collateral damage. We didn't know what was on that balloon. We knew it was the size of three schoolbuses. That is not a small operation. And whether it included anything that was dangerous to us, radioactive or some sort of explosive, we just didn't know.

I think we did the right thing. We waited until it was off the coast, the Atlantic Coast, still near our own territorial waters, and shot it down, and now we are recovering what was in it.

As for the other elements, we are going to be briefed this week on China, and I believe those questions are certainly going to be asked and should be asked. I will be there on a bipartisan basis, as I was last week. It is serious, and we ought to take it seriously. But the notion that we would shoot this down over Louisville, KY, or Springfield, IL, or Chicago—that is not responsible. I trust our military to make that decision and to understand where the debris field might be that would endanger people.

REMEMBERING SEAN O'SHEA

Madam President, on a separate topic, I want to talk about a friend of mine who just passed away. He was a selfless son of Chicago who did a lot of good for a lot of people.

Sean O'Shea was a political science major at DePaul University in Chicago when he was chosen to intern in the White House Office of Cabinet Affairs under President Clinton.

Mitch Dudek recently wrote a beautiful obituary in the Chicago Sun-Times. The first line reads:

Sean O'Shea had an endearing quality that, combined with grit and chutzpah, served as a lock-picking device of sorts on doors leading from his South Side home all the way to the White House.

Kris Balderston, who was Sean's first boss in the White House, recalled his first impressions. I will substitute some of the more colorful language.

He said:

I'm not exaggerating. The guy walked in our office and I think within the first day we were like, "Who the [bleep] is this kid?" He was amazing.

He totally stood out from every intern we ever had. He was like "mentorship? I know what I'm doing here," and he wasn't kidding. People would ask, "How old is he?" And I'd tell them, "You don't want to know."

He was the son of Irish immigrants and didn't know anyone. And he was just funny and personal and a real doer.

And everyone in the White House, from the President and Mrs. Clinton on down, fell in love with Sean O'Shea. Sean made such an impression that after he graduated, he was offered a full-time job as a liaison between the White House and several Cabinet Agencies. He was then in his early twenties.

After the White House, Sean served as top aide to Senator Hillary Clinton and handled domestic appropriations bills, transportation and infrastructure. He was an adviser on the Northern Ireland peace process.

He then went back home to Illinois to serve as deputy chief of staff to former Governor Pat Quinn, overseeing tens of billions of dollars in transportation and other capital improvement projects. He also helped pass marriage equality in my State of Illinois.

In hindsight, maybe Sean packed so much into such a short span because he would not be given the gift of a long life. He passed away last month of brain cancer at the age of 46.

Sean Francis Patrick O'Shea grew up on the South Side of Chicago, the youngest of Joe and Mary O'Shea's four kids. His parents were both born in Ireland, and they met at a dance in Chicago. Like many immigrant parents, Joe and Mary taught their kids to be proud of their heritage and to be grateful they were Americans. Sean's dad worked for the Chicago water department as an operating engineer. His mom worked in the Office of the Cook County Assessor.

Joe O'Shea was an accordion player and past president of the Chicago chapter of the Irish Musicians Association—God bless him—who insisted that all

four of their children learn Irish dancing.

One of Joe's proudest moments was in 2000, when Sean was asked if he could recommend any Irish musicians from Chicago to play at President Clinton's final St. Patrick's Day in the White House. Sean put in a plug for his dad and some dancers from the Irish dance school he attended in Chicago. He and his sister were able to watch as their dad played for the President and First Lady.

Sean also was that rare South Sider who was a Chicago Cubs fan, which is a big deal in Chicago. He was a regular at Cubs spring training in Arizona with his friends from WGN television and radio. He never missed the big game, which ranged from opening day to game 7 of the World Series, to any random Tuesday when the Cubs were well out of playoff contention. He loved the sport, the Cubs, and Wrigley Field, and to experience those days with his family and friends.

Sean was incredibly proud to have helped make Kerry Wood Cubs Field—which has given countless Chicago children the chance to play baseball—a reality during his time in the Governor's office.

He also loved people. Sean's husband Sebastian said they could go into a restaurant or bar where neither of them knew anyone, and by the time they left, Sean knew everyone and had the phone numbers of 10 new friends in his pocket. As one of Sean's friends said, "He left every room better than when he came in."

But what Sean loved most of all was helping others. He was a good, honorable man who believed that government could make life better for people and that public service was a privilege. He could often be heard saying, "How can I help?" He had a tremendous impact on the lives of people in Chicago, in Illinois, across America, and beyond. His contributions will make a difference for years to come, and he will be deeply missed.

Sean's funeral mass was held at Old St. Pat's Parish Church in Chicago. The church was filled with hundreds of floral arrangements and packed with his friends and countless people whose lives he touched. The last song they played, of course, was an Irish tune called "The Parting Glass." It is about a man who is leaving his friends behind. It includes the lines:

Come fill to me the parting glass. Good night and joy be with you all.

That is how Sean would want to be remembered—as a good man who used his short time on Earth to make the world better and bring joy to so many people.

Loretta and I send our deepest condolences to Sean's husband Sebastian Contreras, Jr.; his mother Mary; his siblings, Michael, Daniel, and Colleen; his niece and nephew, Declan and Delaney; and to Sean's friends—too numerous to count. May you find comfort in your memories.

DREAM ACT

Madam President, they say to me, to be an effective Senator, you have to be patient, but what I am about to describe tests that theory.

It has been 22 years since I introduced the DREAM Act.

The best chance we ever had to pass it came to mind as I listened to the Republican leader a few minutes ago talking about the horrors of fentanyl and drugs that are crossing our borders and recount the numbers of people who are showing up at our borders as well. It brought back my memory of something called the Gang of 8—four Democrats and four Republicans—including John McCain, LINDSEY GRAHAM, Senator Flake, Senator RUBIO, Senator SCHUMER, Senator BENNET of Colorado, Senator MENENDEZ, and myself. We worked for almost a year to put together a comprehensive immigration reform that was long overdue. It included border security at a level unseen in America ever. We were prepared to invest billions of dollars to make our border safe.

We passed this bill with, I think, 68 votes here on the floor of the Senate. I thought, finally, after 30 years of talking about immigration and batting it back and forth between Democrats and Republicans, we are finally going to do something on a bipartisan basis. We took that measure and sent it over to the Republican-led House of Representatives. They refused to even consider it—refused to consider it.

So when I hear concerns and complaints today that our border just isn't safe enough, I agree. But I ask those who are complaining: Where were you when we brought this bipartisan measure to the floor, which had so much enforcement in it and really would have given us a safer situation today and for years to come?

We can do that again.

I agree completely with Senator MCCONNELL that the drug crisis in America is serious, not just in Kentucky but in my State of Illinois and in yours, too, and all across this Nation. I also understand that there are too many people presenting themselves at the border believing they are going to somehow find their way into this country.

I have met with many of them who were brought on buses to the city of Chicago. You should hear their stories. These are not people who are out trying to deceive the system or cheat the laws of America. They are desperate people—desperate for the safety of themselves and their children, desperate for an opportunity to have hope and a future.

You sit down with them and think: How could they be much different than my mother, who was an immigrant to this country at the age of 2? She came here with her family looking for a better life. She found it, and because she found it, I did too.

That story is the story of America. Immigration is the story of America.